

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Stockbridge, Massachusetts

PO Box 825 Stockbridge MA 01262



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all

June 2024

Land Acknowledgement

It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are learning, speaking, gathering, and worshiping on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite

tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

Pastor: The Rev. Brent Damrow - bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org

Minister of Music: Peter Frost - music@stockbridgeucc.org

Administrator/Sexton: Will Garrison – office@stockbridgeucc.org

Financial Secretary: Marion Pomeroy - finance@stockbridgeucc.org

(413) 298-3137 | www.stockbridgeucc.org

Office hours: 9:00-2:00, Monday - Friday

June 2024

The First Congregational Church, UCC, Stockbridge

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			Yoga Classes are Wednesdays at 9:00am			1 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
2 Worship 10:00am Pride Sunday	3 <i>Second Nature Arts</i> 3:30	4 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Second Nature Arts 3:30</i> <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	5 Morning Prayer 8 am Discovering 11:45am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Council 7:00pm	6 Bell choir 4:30pm Choir rehearsal 7:00pm	7 Service League 10:30am	8 <i>Pride Parade and Festival – Pittsfield</i> <i>11:00am</i> <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
9 Worship 10:00am CE Sunday <i>BWHS graduation</i> <i>2:00pm</i>	10 "transforming" book discussion 6:30pm – 8:00pm	11 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	12 Morning Prayer 8 am Discovering the Bible 11:45am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Community Meal 5:30 Bible Study 5:30pm	13 Bell choir 4:30pm Choir rehearsal 7:00pm	14 Service League 10:30am	15 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
16 Worship 10:00am Choir Sunday	17	18 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Tuesday Club 1:45pm</i> <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	19 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Meetings of the Boards 5:00pm – 9:00pm	20 Newsletter deadline	21 Service League 10:30am	22 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
23 Worship 10:00am	24 "transforming" book discussion 6:30pm – 8:00pm	25 Brent's Sabbath Day <i>Al-Anon 7:00pm</i> <i>AA 8:00pm</i>	26 Morning Prayer 8 am Bible Study Zoom 1:00 Discovering the Bible 5:45pm Bible Study 5:30pm	27	28 Service League 10:30am	29 Appalachian Trail ministry 9:45-3:15 <i>Al-Anon 5:00pm</i>
30 Worship 10:00am						



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Stockbridge, Massachusetts

June 2024 Newsletter

Dear Church Family,

Breathe it in! The vibrancy of spring is already beginning to move into the fullness of summer. Before long lettuces will be full and ready for harvest, blossoms on fruit trees will be more fully recognizable as the bounty they will become, the roads will start to clog with people seeking sanctuary, and our calendars will start filling with the likes of Tanglewood, Jacob's Pillow, vacations, and other summer traditions. Summer is full of blessings – may we find balance in them!

There are other kinds of fullness gathering too. Anxiety around court cases, elections, and our future is building thanks to ever-present reporting and opinion-making. Early heat waves are producing concern about what kinds of temperatures we may face in July and August.

Wars in both Ukraine and Gaza are showing no signs of improvement, instead increasing complexity and leaving less room for hope regarding long-term outcomes.

This summer I invite you into the fullness of our faith and the joy and meaning that comes with it.

This summer I invite you to take the time to linger in quiet and relaxed relationship.

This summer I invite you to do less and abide more.

This summer I invite you to experience sabbath.

This summer we are planning for worship that is simple, honest, and inviting. While the organ is

being restored our music will explore the beauty of piano and melodies that are inviting and joyful. We are currently planning events that invite people to be together without a great deal of planning or preparation.

We work hard as a church. We accomplish so much. This summer my hope for us is not to take the summer off as a church, but to focus on those aspects of faith that are generative, life-giving,

enjoyable, and restorative. This summer I want to see you and have the chance to simply be together in meaningful ways.

In many ways I am inviting us into an extended Sabbath. The Commandment to “Remember” the Sabbath is the fourth

commandment and it ties together the first three commandments of loving God with the last six about loving neighbor. Sabbath is about intentionally honoring God, remembering enough is enough, resting not as an escape but as a truth, and finding simple gifts that elude us when we are always on the move. May we live that way on Sundays this summer gathered in worship and joined in fellowship. May we also intentionally live that way all summer long that we might find fullness not of calendar but of faith, hope and love. Come and see!

Pastor Brent



HAPPY JUNE BIRTHDAYS

June 1	Lynda Morse
June 2	Rebecca Hall
June 6	Evelyn Battaglia Beth Rodgers
June 7	Mary Hoeltzel Barbara Moore
June 12	Michael Deegan
June 12	Joe Catino
June 13	Anne Hutchinson
June 16	Thomas Frelinghuysen
June 19	Fiona Brown Jean Stackhouse Ruth Wheat
June 21	Gary Cilley
June 24	Anne Fix
June 26	Pat LaBagh
June 28	Becky Smith



Calling all college students!

If you are a church member, or your parent is a member or an employee of the church, and you're matriculated

as a student in an accredited college, you are eligible to receive a grant through the church's Scholarship Committee.

In order to process applications in time for the beginning of the fall semester, please note that the deadline has been moved forward to June 30. (The amount of the grant varies from year to year depending on the number of applicants and the performance of the underlying investments.)

Please request a grant by contacting Will Garrison in the church office or Margaret Hornick, at mhhornick@gmail.com.

Margaret Hornick, Scholarship Committee

Round(s) of Applause!

~ Peter Frost, Minister of Music

Applause and major thanks, for our Bells, our singing children, and our Adult Choir!

I would like to thank our three choirs for their dedication this year in bringing wonderful music to our services. It is easy I think, to take our choirs for granted as we see them on a regular basis. It is similar to how we often think of our parents growing up. That is why we have a Mother's and a Father's Day celebration. To commit to weekly rehearsals and regular attendance to services is something we all can appreciate.

I would like to take a moment to thank Elisabeth Bellows and Liza Catino for singing with our children during Sunday School this year. To have the kids learning songs they might otherwise never learn is a real treat. Having Jill Wheat rejuvenate what we now call "Children's Special Music" has been wonderful. Thank you, Jill.

Our Bell Choir also deserves a huge thank you, led by Mary Jo Erickson Connor. Bravissima Mary Jo and Company. You will get to enjoy and thank the Bell Choir and Children's Special Music on CE Sunday, June 9th. On Sunday, June 16th, we will feature our Adult Choir. We are preparing some beautiful music for the occasion which will not only feature our Adult Choir, but also our wonderful quartet of soloists. Then all of our music groups everyone will get a well deserved break to fully enjoy the beautiful summer in these mountains. I look forward to some beautiful music.



The end-of-the-year Music Party

If you have participated in the Bell Choir, Children's Special Music, or the Adult Choir this year, you are invited to our Music Party. We'll celebrate a wonderful year of music for our church community. If you are an outgoing and incoming member of the Board of Music you are also invited. We will pick a date, find a park, and get back to you with the details.

Be back soon, Peter

Christian Education Sunday: June 9

Come join us in the worship service for a festive celebration of all we, both children and adults, have learned together since last September! Ever wonder what goes on in the Sunday school room during worship service? We will show you. Please consider becoming one of our volunteer teachers or assistants for the next school year.

Administrator Notes

The scammers are back. Several people have reported that they received emails supposedly from Pastor Brent, asking for contributions using gift cards. **These are scams!** The best way to tell is to look at the email address. Brent's email address ends with @stockbridgeucc.org. All other addresses (e.g. pastorbrent@gmail.com) are fake. Questions? Call the church office.

Would you like to receive the newsletter via email in addition to, or instead of, a paper copy? Just let me know. The pdf version is in full color!

The church building is busy. If you want to use a room, please check in with me first so that I can put your meeting on the calendar.

Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions. Will Garrison, 413-298-3137; office@stockbridgeucc.org

Have you been visiting this church for a while and thinking about calling it home?



Please contact Pastor Brent to talk about how to make this step in your faith journey. We try to offer this twice a year, so if now is not the right time, another opportunity will come soon.

Pastor Brent can be reached at
bdamrow@stockbridgeucc.org or
413-298-3137 x11

Wednesday Community Dinner

Eating together nourishes our bodies and our souls. All are welcome to a **cookout** on **June 12** at the church. The food will be ready at 5:30 p.m. and served until 7:00 or so. People may arrive whenever is best for them and stay as long as they like. The food will be simple, nut-free, and include a vegetarian and gluten-free option.

No one is obligated to bring anything. Those who wish to contribute, help cook, or bring a dish can.

Strengthen the Church: Special Congregational Offering

On May 19, Pentecost Sunday, we joined with United Church of Christ churches across the country to give to the Strengthen the Church special offering, which supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering helps the UCC fulfill its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities. The funds raised support new churches, leadership development, youth ministry, and innovation in existing congregations.

The exact amount raised will be reported in the next newsletter. We had a very enthusiastic response, and we thank you for giving prayerfully and generously to help build up the Body of Christ.



CONSTRUCT's Warm Up the Winter Campaign

Construct raised \$117,000 this year for emergency winter fuel assistance.

Tristan Osgood raised \$4,761 of that amount.

Our congregation raised \$1,519 of Tristan's total.

Thank you for your generosity!

From the Service League

We all pitched in to help Growth and Fellowship with the new nametags. A hard-working crew spent a couple of hours stuffing nametags into little plastic cases. Check yours out in the narthex at the next service! They're quite stylish (for nametags). And, don't worry - the tags have actual names printed on them!



This was a bit of a departure from our usual routine of knitting, crocheting, pricing, sewing, etc. We do believe that **Jane McCormick** has set a new record for production: At last count, she had made over 100 scrubbies and ornaments. We're contacting *Ripley's Believe it or Not* if this keeps up (which I'm pretty sure it will). If you want to know more, you will just have to come to the Summer Fair on August 10, and the Holly Fair, on December 7. Scrubbies and ornaments are just the tip of the production iceberg, along with all sorts of baked goods, crafts, jams and jellies...the list goes on!

And of course we love your donations, especially to Grandma's Attic, where your no-longer-needed items are magically converted into support for mission projects. We will also welcome helping hands!

Margaret Hornick, for the Service League

ACTIVE PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

On May 5, our church revived the practice of an Active Prayer of Thanksgiving as an act of gratitude after receiving communion. We encouraged the congregation to bring non-perishable food items and/or money for food, to be given to a local food pantry. We had a procession to the front of the sanctuary (that's the active part!) to bring our donations (that's the thankful response part!). In May, our donations went to the People's Pantry in Great Barrington. The congregation's enthusiastic response produced four large bins of food and approximately \$324.00 in monetary donations. Thank you!

On June 2, the Active Prayer of Thanksgiving will go to our congregation's Pop Up Pantry.



We encourage donations of food and/or money for Mission & Action's grocery runs.

Food items needed: Nut-free butters (such as Sun Butter), gluten free items (cereal, pasta, mac & cheese, crackers), box milk, canned items (fruit, veggies, beans, soup, tuna, chicken, diced tomatoes), box cereal, oatmeal (drums or boxes of packets), peanut butter, box rice, pasta, mac & cheese, crackers, toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, bar soap, lotion). And "extra" items are always appreciated: drinks, condiments, cookies, etc.

If you wish to contribute by check, please make your check payable to First Congregational Church, memo line: Pop Up Pantry.

We look forward to responding to Christ's offering of spiritual food at communion by giving generously to our neighbors' need for physical nourishment. As you do this for the members of God's family who have food insecurity, Jesus tells us "that was me – you did it for me."

CATHEDRAL OF THE BELOVED

On April 28th, we were graced with beautiful spring weather—a perfect accompaniment to the meal our church team served at Cathedral of the Beloved (COTB) in Pittsfield. Worship and lunch were held on the front lawn of St. Joseph Catholic Church on North St. Every week, year-round, COTB hosts an informal worship service followed by a meal. It offers a special welcome to those who are homeless or disadvantaged.

What is worship like at COTB? Folks arrive from all directions—some on foot, some in wheelchairs, some pushing strollers. The coffee station is often the first stop for the attendees. They particularly rejoiced over the half & half on the coffee table that day! Sitting or standing on the lawn, some of us joined with those worshipping. After music and a message, a question was posed to the group: “Why are you still here today?” Heartfelt tears and statements of gratitude poured forth from those who have, by some standards, seemingly little.

After the service, it was time for more sustenance . . . this time in the form of food! The menu consisted of beef stew (8 large crockpots’ worth), dinner rolls generously donated by Berkshire Mountain Bakery, salad, cookies, and water. Under the fine leadership of Martha Floyd, the team included shoppers on Friday, food prep crew on Saturday, and eight servers on Sunday. Many thanks to Martha & Rick Floyd, seven members of West Stockbridge Church, Beth Cilley, Terry Wise, Carl Bradford, Marion Pomeroy, Vicky Cooper, Tracy Wilson, and Cindy & Jack Brown.

We will be volunteering for this ministry again later in 2024. We hope you’ll join us! As Rick Floyd so simply and poignantly summarized, “This is church.”

Mission & Action - Recent Expenditures

- \$359.00 for food for church’s Pop Up Pantry (Local Needs)
- \$515.00 for food for 4/28 meal at Cathedral of the Beloved, Pittsfield (Local Needs)
- \$1,255 to UCC for One Great Hour of Sharing offering (Restricted Fund)

Thank You from The People’s Pantry

Thank you for your gift of \$700 to The People’s Pantry. Your support allows us to continue to provide healthy food for our neighbors facing food insecurity even as the number of people needing assistance grows. ~ Beth Moser, President, Board of Directors

Thank You from Church World Service

Disasters often strike without warning, but thanks to your generous contribution of \$100 and 50 Hygiene Kits, Church World Service will be better prepared to provide emergency assistance when and where it is needed. I am so moved by your generosity as you join us in providing help and hope. Thank you, and may God bless you for your support. ~ Rick Santos, President/CEO

All Church Birthday Party

On May 5th we gathered for our All Church Party. A dreary day outside, it was jubilant inside with good food, good fun, and good fellowship. We gathered at seasonal tables and partook in an amazing potluck lunch followed by entertainment. Each table devised a seasonal song and, bedecked with appropriate costuming and props, serenaded the rest of us. Were we in tune? Not always, but we were fabulous.

There was, of course, a parade of cakes in 8 different varieties. Many thanks to Jane, Cathy, Margaret, Sarah, Jake, Holland, Jeannene, Liz and Diane for their luscious bakes. Which cake was best? Not even going there! But the most sampled (demolished) cake was Jake’s Oreo cake. We hope to see that one again next year.

How old did we turn? Our best guess was about 2496 collectively. Be there next year when we celebrate our 2561st, God willing.



Pride Month: Worship, Parade, and Community Conversations

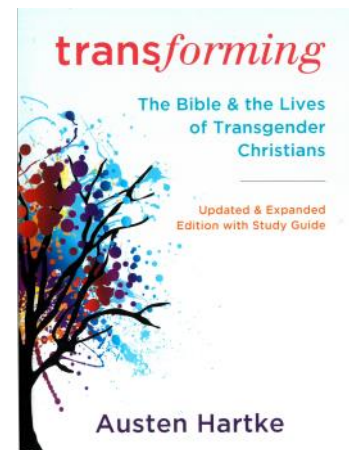


As an Open and Affirming (and extravagantly welcoming) Congregation we are planning to engage with our LGBTQ+ Community in a celebration of Pride Month. June 2 is Pride Sunday; we invite the larger community into a book read, and join with our fellow churches in Pride activities in Pittsfield.

June 2, at 10:00am: Our worship will celebrate God’s inclusive love as part of LGBTQ+ Pride Month. All are welcome to participate fully. It will be a joyful service of song, prayer, readings, communion, and blessing. We take seriously our faith and its teachings. We are Open and Affirming of all people not to be nice or to be politically correct, but because it is how we read the Bible, how we love neighbor, how we follow in the way of Jesus. We invite people to come in ways that make them comfortable. There will be a nursery for young children, Sunday School for older children, and a time of food and fellowship to follow. We look forward to seeing you. Invite a friend!

June 8: Please come to the parade and festival on The Common, in Pittsfield. Parade: 11:00am; Festival: 11:00-4:00pm. If you’d like to participate, please fill out the form available in the JE Room or online via the church website www.stockbridgeucc.org.

June 10 & 24, 6:30pm - 8:00pm: Join the Community Conversation, discussing Austen Hartke’s “transforming – the Bible and the Lives of Transgender Conversations.” More information and signup form available on the church website, www.stockbridgeucc.org.



Appalachian Trail Corner of Kindness - June 29

We seek volunteers to help welcome and feed through-hikers on June 29, 9:45 - 3:15. This low-key family friendly “trail magic” event is led by the Sheffield churches. To learn more, please contact the church office.



Family News - The Strauch Family gathered in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Patty, Sara (niece); Marilyn (mom); William (nephew); Emma (niece); Ali (niece); Cindy (sister). Some of the many Strauch's at the wedding of Morgan Strauch & Ethan Roberts in Bluemont, VA.

